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ABSTRACT

This document provides information and ideas intended to assist the ministers of education and those responsible for economic planning in the Arab States in deliberations and the formulation of recommendations. After an introduction, chapter 1 briefly reviews the achievements of the first four conferences, summarizes developments, and outlines some of the resulting trends and problems. Chapter 2 deals with the universalization and renewal of basic education and the eradication of illiteracy and recounts efforts made at regional and international levels for the provision of basic education for all. Chapter 3 addresses the provision of educational opportunities to special and underprivileged groups and suggests a number of measures to improve the conditions of such groups. Chapter 4 looks at the role of postsecondary and higher education in basic education and literacy programs. The fifth and final chapter provides an overview of regional and international co-operation for educational development and presents a series of questions for the conference. (CK)

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Fifth Conference of Ministers of Education and those Responsible for Economic Planning in the Arab States

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FIFTH CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS OF EDUCATION AND THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR ECONOMIC PLANNING IN THE ARAB STATES

Cairo, Egypt, 19-22 January 1991

UNIVERSALIZATION OF EDUCATION AND IMPROVEMENT OF ITS QUALITY AND RELEVANCE TO PREPARE FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

ED-90/CONF.204/COL.6

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INTRODUCTION

This document has been prepared by the UNESCO Secretariat to provide information and ideas which will assist the fifth Conference of Ministers of Education and those Responsible for Economic Planning in the Arab States in its deliberations and in the formulation of its recommendations. It takes account of the recommendations of the Meeting of Senior Officials Responsible for Education in the Arab States (Amman, 22-26 June 1987) as well as those of the World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien, 5-9 March 1990, hereafter referred to as the Jomtien Conference), the 42nd session of the International Conference on Education (ICE) (Geneva, 3-8 September 1990), the international congress on 'Planning and Management of Educational Development' (Mexico City, 26-30 March 1990, hereafter referred to as the Mexico City Congress) and meetings held in conjunction with the World Decade for Cultural Development, 1988-1997. Furthermore, it took into consideration a number of documents, country reports, conclusions of recent UNESCO meetings on related topics, UNESCO's third Medium-Term Plan (1990-1995), the Arab Education Strategy and the Literacy Programme of the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO).

Chapter 1, after briefly reviewing the achievements of the first four conferences, summarizes developments that have occurred in the area of education since MINEDARAB IV - in both its qualitative and quantitative aspects. It also outlines some of the resulting trends and problems.

Chapter 2 deals with the universalization and renewal of basic education and the eradication of illiteracy, touching upon trends and achievements since MINEDARAB IV. A realistic identification of the obstacles impeding the attainment of literacy and universal basic education is presented, and the challenges imposed by the twenty-first century and their effects are stressed. The chapter also reviews efforts made at regional and international levels for the provision of basic education for all, stressing the Regional Programme for the Universalization and Renewal of Primary Education and the Eradication of Illiteracy in the Arab States by the Year 2000 (ARABUPEAL). Moreover, some major problems whose resolution is a must are identified.

Chapter 3 deals with the provision of educational opportunities to special and underprivileged groups. A number of measures to improve the condition of such groups are reviewed.

Chapter 4 looks at the role of post-secondary and higher education in basic education and literacy programmes, stressing the importance of the functions which higher education should carry out in the fields of renovating and developing basic education and literacy programmes, structures, contents, means, methods and teacher training.

The fifth and final chapter gives an overview of regional and international co-operation for educational development; it presents a series of questions which the Conference may wish to examine.

This document does not claim to be comprehensive. Rather it aims to identify, on the basis of available data, some issues which the Conference may wish to examine, and to raise others which might add to the questions and problems mentioned in the agenda.

As a supplement to the present document, the participants in the Conference will receive three reference documents: ED-91/MINEDARAB/REF.1, ED-91/MINEDARAB/REF.2 and ED-91/MINEDARAB/REF.3.

CHAPTER 1

Development of education in the Arab States region since MINEDARAB IV (Abu Dhabi, 1977) and its future prospects

1. During the 1960s and 1970s, UNESCO organized four Conferences of Ministers of Education and those Responsible for Economic Planning in the Arab States. They generally aimed at examining the educational situation in the Arab States, determining the problems facing these countries, mobilizing the available resources to overcome these problems, promoting awareness of the role of education in economic and social development, stressing the importance of educational planning and finally, suggesting educational strategies suitable to both conditions in the Arab States and the international situation.

2. The first conference (Beirut, 1960) was primarily concerned with educational planning - its importance, its relation to overall planning, the training of planners and the exchange of information necessary for educational planning. The most important outcome was increased interest in educational planning in the Arab States.

3. The second conference (Tripoli, 1966) looked at the goals of education and its priorities for economic and cultural development, the eradication of illiteracy, the quality of education, and regional and international co-operation. The conference stressed quantitative growth in education as a necessary step towards democratization of education and urged Arab States to achieve the goal of compulsory primary education by 1980.

4. At the third conference (Marrakesh, 1970), the six main topics discussed were integration between educational plans and economic and social development plans, equilibrium between the different types and levels of education, quality of education, expansion of technical education, girls' education and functional literacy. It also emphasized the qualitative aspects of education.

5. The fourth conference (Abu Dhabi, 1977) reviewed the main educational trends in the Arab States and new strategies in educational development, laying special emphasis on the role of education in achieving full and productive employment, the provision of education for rural development, the reorganization of the structures of education systems, democratization of education and, finally, regional and international co-operation for education.

6. The education of the Arab Palestinian people was discussed at the Tripoli, Marrakesh and Abu Dhabi Conferences.

7. Although numerous and far-reaching changes were taking place around the world and in the Arab States region during the 1980s, the fifth conference foreseen during the decade did not take place. There was, however, a Meeting of Senior Officials Responsible for Education in the Arab States (Amman, 1987). During this period, the importance of education and its role in cultural, social and economic development and in national security became more obvious. Both developed and developing countries worked on educational reform.

8. The Arab States region in the 1980s faced certain problems which made extra efforts necessary for economic and social development: the price of oil - the main source of wealth for some States - fluctuated considerably; drought and famine beleaguered other States and still others suffered from internal and external struggles, and from wars.

9. The region's population increased from 123 million in 1970 to 222 million in 1990. The number is expected to rise to 292 million in the year 2000 and to

488 million in 2025. The States making up the region vary in size, from over 50 million inhabitants to fewer than 0.5 million. The annual rate of growth (regional average: 2.8 per cent per annum) also varies from State to State.

10. While 61 per cent of the population inhabited rural areas in 1970, the percentage dropped to 52 by 1985 and is expected to reach 35 in the year 2000 unless effective actions and policies are taken to stabilize the rural population through improving the quality of life, promoting investments and developing different forms of education.

11. Meanwhile, the Arab labour force grew from 35.7 million in 1970 to 45.7 million in 1980, and is expected to reach 120 million in the year 2000. It is important to note here that 30 per cent of this labour force belonged to the 15 to 24 age-group in 1980 and that the average of participation in economic activity is relatively fixed at 28 per cent of the labour force. The agricultural, the industrial and the service sectors absorb 50, 22 and 28 per cent of the labour force respectively (the last sector continues to receive and absorb the excess labour force which does not perform productive work, as well as rural emigrants). A heavy migration of labour from the densely populated countries to the less populated oil-producing countries can still be seen.

12. The school-age population (6 to 23 years), estimated at 50 million in 1970, rose to 78 million in 1985 and is expected to reach 121 million in the year 2000 and 172 million in 2025. The number actually in the three levels of the education system was much lower: 17 million in 1970 (see ED-91/MINEDARAB/REF.2, Table 4, page 7, for data from 1975 onwards).

13. One of the most important achievements of the Arab States during the last two decades is the considerable quantitative expansion of education. The number of students in all three educational levels rose to 45 million in 1988.

14. The average annual growth of enrolment in all levels of education during the period 1977 to 1984 reached 5.1 per cent, some 2.2 percentage points higher than the annual average growth of the school-age population, 2.9 per cent. The education system in the Arab States is expanding rapidly, especially in the oil-producing countries where enrolment grew approximately threefold; it rose at a rate of 82 per cent in non oil-producing Arab States. The adjusted gross enrolment ratio as a whole rose from 34.4 per cent in 1970 to 55.3 per cent in 1988.

15. The total annual growth in first-level school enrolment in the Arab States as a whole reached 4.2 per cent on average between 1977 and 1984, while the average population growth in the age-group 6 to 11 was around 3 per cent.

16. In spite of the large increase in the number of first-level pupils (from 13 million in 1970 to 29 million in 1988, expected to reach 42 million in 2000 and 57 million in 2025), enrolment of children aged 6 to 11 reached only 68 per cent in 1980 and 75 per cent in 1988. This means that approximately one quarter of all Arab children between the ages of 6 and 11 do not attend school. If present policies remain unchanged until the year 2000, their enrolment ratio will be 76 per cent of children aged 6 to 11 in 1990, 80 per cent in 1995 and 83 per cent in the year 2000. In other words, 17 per cent of Arab children aged 6 to 11 will be out of school at the end of the century.

17. The situation is worse for girls and women; their enrolment ratio is lower than that for boys, in spite of the achievement during the last two decades (enrolment ratio increased from 39.1 per cent in 1970 to 69.4 in 1990). If the prevailing situation remains unchanged, over one fifth of girls aged 6 to 11 will remain out of school by the year 2000.

18. Education grew quickly in the second level (annual average growth rate 1977 to 1984: 6.8 per cent). This increase was still larger than the corresponding growth rate of the population aged 12 to 17. The number of secondary school students increased from 4 million in 1970 to 7 million in 1977 and to 14 million in 1988. It is expected to reach 27 million in the year 2000 and 45 million in 2025.

19. Another phenomenon characterizing secondary education in the Arab States is the high rate of enrolment in general education (88 per cent in 1980 as against 11 per cent in technical and vocational secondary education). The focus of study favours the soft options. More than 50 per cent of technical and vocational school students specialize in commercial (secretarial) education, 25 per cent in industrial education, 10 per cent in agricultural education and about 4 per cent in home economics and other subjects.

20. The annual average growth rate in higher education reached 7 per cent between 1977 and 1984 (444,000 in 1970, to 900,000 in 1975 and to 2.3 million in 1988). The majority of Arab higher education students specialize in the humanities and the social sciences. Although women's participation in higher education remains low, a slight improvement has occurred (29 per cent of total students enrolled in 1975 to 35 per cent in 1988).

21. Enrolment in pre-school institutions rose from 759,000 children in 1975 to 1.9 million children in 1988. Enrolment rose from 9 per cent of the age-group in 1975, to 15 per cent in 1990. There is a marked disparity between Arab States in the level of available pre-school institutions, due in part to the fact that pre-school education is still largely considered as being outside the education system and many ministries of education prefer to concentrate their efforts on primary and secondary education, leaving the issue of pre-school education to the private sector and to other ministries, especially the ministry of social affairs.

22. In 1970, the number of illiterates in the Arab States reached some 50 million, 73 per cent of the total Arab population aged 15 years and over. As a result of the population growth in the area, although the percentage of illiterates dropped to 48.7 per cent by 1990, the absolute number increased to 61 million. An examination of the statistics available and projections indicates that, if no effective action is taken to change the situation, the number of illiterates will rise to 65.6 million in the year 2000 and 72.1 million in 2025.

23. Illiteracy is more prevalent among women: 62 per cent in 1990. If no serious effort is made to remedy the situation, about 50 per cent of adult women will remain illiterate in the year 2000.

24. The total number of teachers in the region in all three educational levels rose from 824,000 in 1975 to 2,018,000 in 1988. More than half are employed at the first level (1,081,000 in 1988). The student-teacher ratio has improved, from 32, 22 and 20 students per teacher in the first, second and third levels respectively in 1975 to 26, 17 and 18 in 1988. Nevertheless, the region currently faces a deficit of qualified teachers, a situation which will soon worsen, due to the expected rise in the number of students.

25. Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GNP declined between 1975 and 1980, but has since consistently increased and is at present around 6.6 per cent (see ED-91/MINEDARAB/REF.2, Table 18, page 37, for data by country). In 11 Arab States, teachers' salaries represent the largest part of the total expenditure on education (see ED-91/MINEDARAB/REF.2, Table 22, page 43).

26. During the last two decades, the Arab States have accomplished much in the area of education. They have worked seriously towards extending education to previously deprived sectors of the population. They increased the compulsory years of education, raised educational expenditure and concentrated on teacher training and on raising professional standards. They set up many educational research centres, laid down educational plans and worked at developing contents and methods, and applying modern technology to education.

27. Nevertheless, education in the region still faces numerous problems and challenges. Goals concerning the provision of education for children and eradicating adult illiteracy have not been attained, and the wastage rate resulting from drop-out and repetition is rising. Methods that would help in evaluating the education system, at both the micro and the macro levels, as well as educational personnel trained in administration and planning at different levels are needed.

28. Education in the region faces three basic challenges in the 1990s, related to both quality and quantity: (a) the challenge of universalization of education and absorption of a huge number of school-age children and of making educational services available to the groups which are still deprived, especially women, the poor and those living in remote areas; (b) the challenge of the high cost of education in the light of the economic pressures and debts from which most Arab States are suffering, and the necessity of finding new methods for reducing the cost, increasing the productivity and making maximum use of available resources; and (c) the challenge of science and technology, and the ever-widening gap between developed and developing countries.

CHAPTER 2

Universalization of basic education and eradication of illiteracy

29. The years 1976, 1977 and 1978 can be considered a watershed for the development of education at the policy level and on the basis of a regional consensus in the Arab States. They witnessed the adoption of the Arab Literacy Strategy (1976), the conclusions of Abu Dhabi Conference (1977) and the adoption of the Arab Strategy for the Development of Education (1978), three landmarks which provided, and still provide, a continuing source of guidance and support to educational practitioners and decision-makers in the region, resulting in impressive leaps forward in basic education and adult literacy during the 1980s.

30. The primary school population more than doubled between 1970 and 1988. In 1970 some 51 per cent of the population aged 6 to 11 were enrolled in formal school; in 1988 the ratio increased to 75 per cent. In 1970 female enrolment in primary level was 36 per cent; it increased to 38 per cent in 1975 and to 43 per cent in 1988.

31. If this trend continues, enrolment for the age-group 6 to 11 will be 76.4 per cent in 1990 for both sexes (83.2 per cent male and 69.4 per cent female). In the year 2000 the projected ratio will be 82.8 per cent for both sexes (86.9 per cent male and 78.6 per cent female). By 2025 the projected ratio for the same age-group will be 87 per cent for both sexes.

32. Out of the 21 countries only nine in 1990 achieved an estimated enrolment ratio of 90 per cent for the age-group 6 to 11: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Oman, Qatar, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates; four countries attained an estimated ratio of between 50 and 70 per cent (Lebanon, Morocco, Republic of Yemen and Saudi Arabia); while four countries have ratios below 50 per cent: Djibouti, Mauritania, Somalia and Sudan.

33. These ratios will be improved slightly by the year 2000, provided present trends continue. However, the regional trend favours male pupils and urban populations, despite the intensive efforts undertaken by many countries to increase access of girls and rural settled and nomadic populations to education.

34. Achievements have also been made in the domain of adult literacy. In 1970 the literacy rate was estimated at 26 per cent for the age-group 15 years and above for the whole region. In 1990 seven countries had a literacy rate higher than 60 per cent. The ratio for women was estimated in 1990 at 38 per cent compared to 65 per cent for men.

35. Although the overall percentage of illiteracy for the age-group 15 and above had decreased from 55 per cent in 1985 to 49 per cent in 1990, the absolute number of illiterates increased from 59 million in 1985 to 61 million in 1990. The percentage is likely to decrease by the year 2000 to 38 per cent; but again the absolute number will increase, to 66 million, some 50 per cent of the productive work-force in the region.

36. National and selective literacy campaigns were organized in most States with special emphasis on functional and cultural aspects.

37. The quantitative expansion of basic education for children and the relative expansion in adult literacy work were accompanied in some States by some measures aimed at improving the quality of education. More than 12 countries carried out some educational reforms which led to restructuring the education system. Consequently, the concept of basic education replaced

that of primary education in most of these countries, giving children a compulsory period of schooling of between six and nine years. Educational plans showed signs of more attention to qualitative aspects of education. Research and documentation centres were developed as back-up services to the system.

38. Despite the impressive progress made in some States in the education of girls and women, out-of-school girls and illiterate women constitute a majority in all countries. In some States, 75 per cent of school-age girls are out of school and over 90 per cent of women are illiterate. Such a situation calls for special measures.

39. All governments in the region are committed to a policy of universalizing quality basic education for children and adults. So far not one has succeeded in achieving that goal. Even the nine countries which have extended schooling to over 90 per cent of school-age children are questioning the quality of the basic education provided and face an illiteracy rate in excess of 30 per cent among youth and adults. Some of the achievements gained in primary schooling are eroded by wastage in the school system. Many new adult literates relapse for the lack of effective post-literacy activities.

40. The majority of States face the twofold task of expanding education quantitatively and improving its quality at the same time. While the rich and middle-income States may succeed in mobilizing the necessary financial and human resources to achieve their quantitative targets by 2025, the six poorer countries have little chance - if the present state of affairs persists - of making any significant progress on either the quantitative or the qualitative level. In fact, the quality of basic education and literacy programmes in those countries is deteriorating, not for the lack of will and vision but because of lack of adequate resources, mounting debts, increasing pressure for social services (health, food and shelter) and, in some cases, massive 'defence' and 'national security' costs.

41. A questionnaire sent by UNEDBAS in 1989 to all Arab States on the status of basic education and literacy brought out nine important obstacles, common throughout the region, impeding the universalization of basic education.

(a) Inadequacy of financial, material and properly trained human resources.

(b) Unfavourable social attitude of some parents to education in general and to the education of girls and women, particularly in rural areas.

(c) Predominance among poor and uneducated parents of the belief that, in economic terms, the immediate contribution of the labour of their children is more valuable than their schooling where they risk both losing earnings and possible cultural alienation.

(d) Lack of infrastructures necessary to reach shifting populations and other groups in sparsely populated areas in outlying districts.

(e) Natural and man-made disasters resulting in destruction of property and dislocation of populations.

(f) Limited consultation between governments and the population on matters related to education.

(g) Lack of a well-defined policy regarding the development of existing traditional education institutions in society as viable alternatives for educating children, youth and adults.

(h) Lack of a well-defined policy for the use of the mass media (radio and television) to enhance the role of the primary school and literacy programmes.

(i) The relatively weak machinery of educational planning and administration.

42. The major drive in each country has been to make the education system more relevant to the needs of individuals and society. Many serious attempts have been made resulting in varying degrees of success; but there have been no real breakthroughs in the search for the ideal system that can embody the rich cultural heritage of the region and utilize that heritage to move the region forward into modernity. All States of the region seem to be running two separate systems of education: formal schooling, and literacy and adult education.

43. Basic education and literacy are both plagued by inadequate or outright lack of planning, which has created a situation of internal and external inefficiency in both. Training is inadequate and hardly reflects modern trends while low morale resulting from lack of motivation and material incentive reduces performance.

44. For basic education there are nine main factors determining the situation: (a) political decisions determining objectives, structure, content, management and evaluation are not always clear and are often subject to frequent changes; (b) unclearly defined educational objectives prevent accurate measuring of performance and achievements of both the learner and the system; (c) the discrepancy between values taught in the school and the dominant values in society; (d) the imbalance between information available inside and outside the school; (e) use of traditional stereotyped methods of instruction give preference to factual knowledge rather than to problem-solving and emphasize competition rather than co-operation; (f) training of educational personnel follows classical stereotyped models inadequate for enabling them to respond and adapt to changing circumstances; (g) management structure of the education system as a whole is top-heavy and highly centralized, with little room for parents, teachers and other members of the community to participate; (h) evaluation of learners is done through traditional examinations rather than problem-solving approaches and creativity; evaluation of the system as a whole does not relate performance of learners and implementation of the curriculum in its wide sense to the declared objectives of the school nor does it relate the school as an institution to other institutions in society; and (i) research findings in educational innovation and social science rarely find application in reforming the primary school.

45. For literacy programmes there are also nine main determining factors: (a) the political will to eradicate illiteracy has, in most cases, not been backed by mobilizing adequate financial and human resources; (b) the techniques used in publicity and in the mobilization of illiterates failed to strike a sensitive cord among the majority of the target audience, most of whom are poor rural or urban dwellers who consider the task of mastering literacy skills as not a priority or, in some cases, not even a necessity; (c) literacy work is left mainly to one ministry or department without sufficient support from other governmental or non-governmental bodies or from the private sector; (d) the poor quality of teaching and the lack of motivation on the part of both the teacher and the learner are common characteristics of literacy programmes, as is the fact that most literacy teachers lack appropriate training; (e) the basic literacy phase is rarely followed by a well-planned post-literacy phase, resulting in considerable relapse; (f) limited use is made of traditional institutions of learning to eradicate illiteracy in a functional manner, offering the learner a better scope for vocational and professional improvement of his/her career;

(g) management of literacy and adult education programmes is often modelled on the formal primary education system, highly centralized and very bureaucratic, with almost no consultations with the adult learner; (h) literacy and adult education activities are left in most cases to non-professional workers with little or no training; and (i) universities and research institutes take little interest in literacy and adult education problems.

46. According to UNESCO's third Medium-Term Plan (1990-1995) 'Children of today will live and work in the twenty-first century, in a world becoming ever more complex, interdependent and subject to rapid transformations. Population growth, economic constraints and changing employment structures, the deterioration of the environment, far-reaching progress in science and technology and the increasing production and exchange of knowledge and information are only some of the phenomena which societies will have to face ... What education should be provided today in order to prepare the young for the twenty-first century?' (para. 38).

47. These challenges give rise to a number of issues ranging from cultural, moral and ethical issues to socio-economic and political issues. The cultural, moral and ethical issues culminate around the need to: promote international understanding, co-operation, peace, human rights and fundamental freedoms; develop an awareness and an understanding of environmental problems, as well as an ethical outlook and behaviour conducive to their solution; and resolve the ethical dilemma created by new advances in medicine and biotechnology. The socio-economic and political issues evolve around: Arab co-operation, socio-economic integration and unity; closing the growing gap of economic disparity between the poor and the rich, and improving the deteriorating economic situation in the poorer countries resulting from debts, natural disasters and man-made catastrophes; promoting equality of opportunity between men and women and between rural and urban areas; managing with care the depleting natural resources in the region; sustaining a manageable level of population growth; and coping with the changing patterns of employment as a result of rapid technological and scientific development.

48. As an integral part of the socio-economic system, the region's education systems must address the critical problems of expanding, democratizing and renewing education to cope with the growing pace of scientific and technological development, and the needs of citizens of all ages to increase their knowledge and update their skills. The development of non-formal education as an integral part of a recognized and respected national system of education will, therefore, be a necessary condition for increasing access, especially for the poor and the disadvantaged, to knowledge and culture. The democratization of basic education for children and adults can only be relevant if it can be conceived as part of a series of socio-economic changes designed to bring about real improvement in the material, cultural and moral conditions of society, as a key element in the process of democratizing society as a whole.

49. The purpose of basic education must be clearly defined to match the challenges of the twenty-first century. It must widen children's perspectives of their immediate and wider physical and cultural environment and help them acquire and practise democratic values of tolerance, participation, responsibility and respect for the rights of others. It has to stimulate the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes to learning which will shape their future responses to demands made upon them by the secondary school, by the work place, and by the family and community. Learning must be lifelong, creative, enjoyable, exciting and action-oriented. The curriculum must emphasize co-operation among learners rather than competition, critical thinking rather than memorization, interactive rather than transmissive learning. It should provide the learner with wide opportunities for flexible and open access to resources in the school and the surrounding environment, and be a good medium for linking education to the world of work.

50. The foundation for science and technology and their impact on everyday life should constitute a central element in the curriculum of both basic education and non-formal education for adults. The development of intermediate low-cost technology will subtantially reduce the prohibitive cost of school buildings and school facilities.

51. Information technology and new communication systems (such as computers, video and television) are already having a far-reaching impact on our life. They should be used for the improvement of learning. However, because of the high cost involved, regional networks could be developed in collaboration with national centres to carry out research, produce materials and train personnel. The trend in some countries towards introducing computers in secondary schools should be encouraged; a start at primary level is imperative.

52. An important task for education in the twenty-first century will be to help learners develop the skills of communication as a prerequisite for living in a plural society. Language teaching becomes a central element in the curriculum. Special attention should be paid to teaching Arabic. Communication can also take place through art and music.

53. Teachers will become facilitators of learning, managers of knowledge rather than masters. Teacher training should prepare teachers for self-instruction.

54. A more democratic management of education will rely on new channels of communication and consultations with parents, teachers, the media and the local community. Evaluation of the learner, the programme and the system will reflect the new orientation. The system as a whole will be evaluated in terms of its relevance to national goals rather than the number of students who pass the final examination.

55. All this will require major changes in educational thinking, practice and provision, as well as financial and human resources. The Arab States region has most of, if not all, the resources it needs to develop an education system that can meet the challenges of the twenty-first century, if all the States act together.

56. UNESCO has, over the past few years, been working very closely with Member States in all regions and with other United Nations agencies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to build up new partnerships for co-operation in the domain of primary education and literacy, an area which is given absolute priority in its third Medium-Term Plan 1990-1995. Six specific modalities or activities involving UNESCO and with implications for the Arab States region are discussed below.

The Regional Programme for the Universalization and Renewal of Primary Education and the Eradication of Illiteracy in the Arab States by the Year 2000 (ARABUPEAL)

57. UNESCO offered technical support to the four developing regions to set up regional programmes based on two fundamental principles: 'Technical co-operation among developing countries (TCDCs) and the need to combat illiteracy through a global approach combining the universalization and renewal of primary education with stepped-up literacy work among out-of-school youth and adults':[1] the Major Project in the Field of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (1981), the Regional Programme for the Eradication of Illiteracy in Africa (1984), the Regional Programme for Universal Provision and Renewal of Primary Education and Eradication of Illiteracy in Asia and the

1. UNESCO, General Conference, twenty-fifth session, Paris, 1989, Plan of Action to Eradicate Illiteracy by the Year 2000, p. 9, para. 27, Paris, UNESCO, 1989 (25 C/71).

Pacific (APPEAL) (1987) and ARABUPEAL (1989). The latter was first proposed to UNESCO by the 1987 Amman meeting. The recommendation was endorsed by the General Conference of UNESCO at its twenty-fourth session (1987, resolution 2.5). The Meeting of Experts on the Regional Programme for the Universalization and Renewal of Primary Education and the Eradication of Illiteracy in the Arab States by the Year 2000, Amman, June 1988, attended by representatives of 13 countries, including nine under-secretaries, together with representatives of ALECSO, the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) and the Arab Bureau for Education in the Gulf States (ABEGS), approved the document embodying the programme objectives, mode of operation and Plan of Action. The General Conference of UNESCO at its twenty-fourth session (1987) had approved setting up this programme and the Director-General launched it in Amman on 19 February 1989. The programme provides an excellent structure for regional co-operation among Arab States and between the Arab States region and the rest of the world, making use of UNESCO's channels and experiences, and effectively liaising with ALECSO/ARLO (Arab Literacy and Adult Education Organization), ISESCO and ABEGS.

58. General objectives of the programme: To contribute to the development of Arab educational systems at the level of literacy and primary education so as to ensure the right to education for all, enhance socio-economic development and contribute to the release of creative energies in the society'.[1]

59. 'The specific objective of the programme is to consolidate Arab national and regional efforts and offer technical assistance and advisory services to the Arab Member States, with a view to achieving the following objectives:

1. to provide the opportunity, by the year 2000, for all children of school age to enrol in the primary stage of education for a continued period of at least six years;

2. to eliminate illiteracy among youth and adults in the context of providing education for the whole society;

3. to improve the quality of both formal and non-formal education and raise the level of efficiency of educational systems through their interaction with development programmes, as well as through reform, renewal and integration between both formal and non-formal sectors of education;

4. to widen the scope of dialogue between educational institutions and the home on the one hand, and between the State and the civic society on the other'.[2]

60. The programme's Plan of Action concentrates on the development of administration and planning; curriculum development, teaching methods and aids; teacher education and training; and educational and social research. The programme has an Advisory Committee appointed by the Director-General to represent Arab Member States and regional and international organizations. Implementation is based on a partnership between the Arab States and Arab regional organizations on the one hand, and UNESCO on the other.

61. After the initial discussion at the 1988 experts' meeting, the Plan of Action, which covers a period of ten years, was widely discussed in

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1. Meeting of Experts on the Regional Programme for the Universalization and Renewal of Primary Education and the Eradication of Illiteracy in the Arab States by the Year 2000, Amman, 1988, Regional Programme for the Universalization and Renewal of Primary Education and the Eradication of Illiteracy in the Arab States by the Year 2000, p. 8, Amman, UNEDBAS, 1988.
2. Ibid., pp. 8-9.

subregional and regional meetings during 1990 (in Rabat by Maghrib countries in January; in Kuwait by Gulf States and Iraq and in Doha by all Arab States and regional organizations in February). It was the main topic of discussion at the first session of the Advisory Committee.

UNESCO's Plan of Action for the Eradication of Illiteracy by the Year 2000

62. 'The plan identifies four major objectives upon which UNESCO's efforts should be focused: (1) alerting world public opinion; (2) rallying the international community; (3) strengthening the regional literacy projects and programmes; and (4) reinforcing technical co-operation with Member States. Two priorities are proposed: (1) to improve the education of women and girls; and (2) to deal with countries confronting especially severe problems of illiteracy. In the final chapter, reinforcement of staffing and budget is proposed to strengthen UNESCO's capacity to assist its Member States during the period covered by the Plan of Action, 1990-1999'.[1]

International Literacy Year 1990

63. The Plan of Action started with International Literacy Year 1990, proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Resolution 42/104 in December 1987, which also invited UNESCO to assume the role of lead organization. This action was in response to resolution 2.2 of the General Conference of UNESCO at its twenty-third session in 1985 appealing for an international literacy year. In 1988 the Director-General established a special ILY Secretariat and an international Task Force, and appealed to Member States to set up national committees. The ILY Secretariat, in collaboration with substantive divisions at UNESCO Headquarters, the Regional Offices, non-governmental organizations and national committees has succeeded in increasing public awareness in different parts of the world. In the Arab States, a number of activities took place on both national and regional levels.

World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien, March 1990) and world co-operation

64. UNESCO, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Bank organized the Jomtien Conference to secure a commitment of world leaders, and international and other organizations to working together to achieve 'education for all'. 'International co-operation should give priority to the countries currently least able to meet the basic learning needs of their populations. It should also help countries to redress their internal disparities in educational opportunity. Because two thirds of illiterate adults and out-of-school children are female, wherever such inequities exist, a most urgent priority is to improve access to education for girls and women, and to remove every obstacle that hampers their active participation'.[2] As a follow-up to the World Conference, 'UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank have agreed to increase support to basic education within each of their own planning frameworks, structures and resources allocation mechanisms'.[3]

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1. UNESCO, General Conference, twenty-fifth session, Paris, 1989, Plan of Action to Eradicate Illiteracy by the Year 2000, op. cit., 'Summary'.
2. World Conference on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs, Jomtien, Thailand, 1990, Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs (endorsed by the Conference on 9 March 1990), para. 15, New York, Inter-Agency Commission for the World Conference on Education for All, 1990.
3. World Conference on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs, Jomtien, 1990, Final Report, Appendix 3, p. 65, New York, Inter-Agency Commission for the World Conference on Education for All, 1990.

International congress on 'Planning and Management of Educational Development', Mexico City, 26-30 March 1990

65. The congress discussed at length, among other topics, the role of educational planning and management in the renewal and generalization of basic education and elimination of illiteracy by the year 2000. The need for reconsideration of planning strategies and techniques to cater for crisis situations, to strike a balance between qualitative and quantitative planning, and to build up an information base to help decision-makers and researchers in the domain of educational planning and management was stressed.

International Conference on Education (ICE), Geneva, 3-8 September 1990

66. The 42nd session of ICE organized by the International Bureau of Education (IBE) was devoted to primary education and literacy with the purpose of dealing with technical issues of implementing policies which can make 'education for all' a reality.

67. Basic education and literacy, though they address by far the largest target group in all countries of the region, are considered but a subsector of the overall education system in each State. They have to compete with other sectors of education for funds not only to expand this level of education, but also to improve its quality. The balance is frequently tipped in favour of secondary and higher education. The sheer increase in numbers of children and illiterate adults illustrates the magnitude of the task that lies ahead. Enrolment in primary education is expected to double between 1988 and 2025.

68. It is estimated that in the year 2000, two out of every five children in the region will be living in States where universal basic education would not be attained. The States lagging behind are the least developed in terms of quantitative as well as qualitative achievements. Those countries that provide primary education for all children of school age will have the problem of quality and relevance to tackle on the one hand, and the problem of illiteracy and continuing adult education on the other.

69. Radical solutions are needed for the existing situation where more than 10 million children of school age are out of school either because there are no places for them or because of some socio-economic factors or some catastrophic situation generated by natural disaster or war. In addition to these children, there are around 42 million illiterate adults. This critical and very alarming situation calls for a new look full of imagination and new thinking. The Conference may wish to discuss the issues raised by the following questions and their implications for basic education, literacy and adult education in the region. There is a need to agree on a new strategy for the twenty-first century, evolving from measures designed to deal effectively with the present situation. Priorities for such a strategy and modalities of co-operation, financing and evaluation need to be clearly defined.

1. Can the Arab States extend quality basic education to every child of school age by the year 2025?

2. How can additional resources be mobilized for basic education and literacy, particularly in the poor countries?

3. How can modern technology with all that it implies be used to accelerate the dissemination and democratization of knowledge and culture in the region?

4. How can the Arab States deal with the problem of illiteracy in all its forms - alphabetical, functional and cultural - within the context of the co-ordinated strategies? How can each State build up

a national system of continuing education with open, flexible options relevant to the varying needs of learners?

5. How can national capacities in planning, management and evaluation of basic education, and literacy and post-literacy activities be strengthened?

6. How can ARABUPEAL be developed as a regional structure to facilitate co-operation among all Arab States and regional organizations on the one hand, and between the Arab States region and other regions and international organizations on the other?

7. What are the most suitable modalities for building up national networks to co-ordinate research, innovation, preparation of materials, training personnel and evaluation in the domain of basic education and literacy, within the framework of ARABUPEAL, and in co-operation with EIPDAS and other regional structures? How can the regional programme strengthen regional networking in dealing with educational issues: reform, innovation, research, training, etc.?

CHAPTER 3

Provision of educational opportunities for special and disadvantaged groups

70. Although education systems in most States of the region have qualitatively improved and quantitatively grown rapidly since the Abu Dhabi Conference, many States still need to further educational equity among all segments of the population and extend educational opportunities to all groups in the society.

71. UNESCO's third Medium-Term Plan calls for the universalization and democratization of primary education; the World Declaration on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs adopted by WCEFA, calls for the provision of basic education to all children, young people and adults, and for elimination of existing educational disparities among disadvantaged populations and underserved groups; ARABUPEAL affirms these principles.

72. For the purposes of the document, special and disadvantaged groups are limited to women, rural population, nomadic population, migrants and their dependants, displaced Palestinian children and the physically handicapped or the disabled. Although full data on these groups are not available, an attempt will be made to highlight the main issues and problems involved.

Education for girls and women

73. The World Declaration on Education for All states that 'The most urgent priority is to ensure access to, and improve the quality of, education for girls and women, and to remove every obstacle that hampers their active participation. All gender stereotyping in education should be eliminated'.[1]

74. Women's illiteracy rates in the region are significantly higher than those for men (see ED-91/MINEDARAB/REF.2, Table 2, page 5), reflecting the educational opportunities available to girls and women.

75. Research has confirmed the importance of the mother's educational level for the survival and health of her children, for the development of cognitive and language skills and for the child's propensity to stay in school. Generally speaking, women with little education will continue to have a marginal role in society, little control over their own affairs, and less economic and financial independence.

76. All Arab States are undergoing development which requires the full participation of the economically active population, regardless of sex. Moreover, available statistics show that the rates of women's participation in the labour force in all Arab States are increasing, although the rates in various economic sectors are still relatively low. Increasing demands for an educated, skilled and well-trained labour force necessitate upgrading the quality and quantity of education given to females.

77. While school enrolment trends in the region as a whole show significant increases at all levels, female enrolment is still at a much lower level than male enrolment. In 1988, girls accounted for 43, 41 and 35 per cent of enrolments in the first, second and third levels. However, these regional figures tend to mask the differences between countries (see ED-91/MINEDARAB/REF.2, Figure 2, page 12).

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1. World Conference on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs, Jomtien, 1990, World Declaration on Education for All (adopted by the Conference on 9 March 1990), Article 3, para. 3, New York, Inter-Agency Commission for the World Conference on Education for All, 1990.

78. The disparity of literacy between males and females cannot be ignored. The literacy rates for men and women 15 years and above were respectively 64.3 per cent and 38 per cent in 1990. As a result of national strategies and policies in most Arab States, illiteracy is expected to decline more rapidly during the coming decade; however, illiteracy rates among women are expected to rise, especially in the rural areas.

79. The Conference may wish to consider adequate and effective measures at national, regional and international levels, to create an awareness of the problem among decision-makers; establish a good climate and non-discriminatory attitudes in the family and in the school; introduce into literacy activities specific issues for women; motivate and convince parents and the community on the necessity to educate girls; give girls an access to technical/vocational education leading to job openings; and create equality of access to employment.

Education of the rural population

80. The rural population throughout the region accounts for almost half the total population. In 1989, 49 per cent of the region's total population lived in rural areas; this proportion is expected to drop to 43 per cent at the end of the century. In 1990, for example, the size of the rural population in eight Arab States is over 50 per cent (Oman, Sudan, Somalia, Mauritania, Republic of Yemen, Algeria, Morocco and Egypt). Generally, the oil-rich countries enjoy high rates of urbanization.

81. In many rural communities throughout the region, the school buildings are hardly adequate: many schools are still being housed in one or two rooms of an antiquated building, several classes are being crowded into a single classroom, and libraries and many other educational facilities are practically non-existent.

82. Teachers supplied to teach in these areas are usually the least experienced, the least educated and the least motivated to teach in a rural setting.

83. Low school attendance rates in rural areas vary between the two sexes. Low attendance rates for males may be attributed to economic reasons, for females to the shortage in resources, to schools giving preference to educating boys and men, and to social pressure resulting from a situation in which education for girls and women is seen as less important. Compulsory education laws must be enforced without distinction between boys and girls.

84. School attainment in rural areas is influenced to a considerable extent by a number of economic and social factors, as well as by factors related to the education system and its adequacy. School attainment in rural areas varies between males and females, with females doing less well than males.

85. The curriculum followed in rural areas has little relevance to rural life: it often does not prepare youngsters for rural life, being largely urban biased. Effective rural education must promote new attitudes towards modernization and must help the young to cope with the new technological trends without making them lose interest in rural life or become more alienated. Jordan, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic and Tunisia introduced certain changes into the curriculum which can help make education more relevant to the needs of the rural people and schools more active in the development of rural communities but such efforts need to be intensified.

Education of the nomadic population

86. The term nomadic is used here to refer to the nomadic and semi-nomadic groups, distinguished by their life-style and occupations; they usually live far from towns and away from the means of modern life, and are continuously on the move.

87. In the States in which nomads traditionally constitute a sizeable proportion of the population (in particular Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic), their number cannot be accurately determined due to lack of data. (Data on the prevailing state of education among the nomadic population are non-existent.)

88. Nomadic areas, compared to urban centres, receive little attention from the central authorities as regards education. However, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Saudi Arabia have introduced mobile schooling for their nomadic populations; in other countries, poorly built schools are being used. School attendance is less enforced in nomadic areas than in more populated areas, and overall attainment and achievement levels among nomadic children are low.

89. Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the Syrian Arab Republic are giving more emphasis to the settlement of their nomadic populations as a means of solving many social and economic problems, including the problem of education faced by this disadvantaged group.

90. Nomadic children need an education system which provides diverse educational opportunities at all educational levels. Teaching content, to be acceptable, must incorporate modern technological knowledge related to their life-style, as well as knowledge of their own cultural values. Teachers should be especially prepared and systematic teacher/parent contacts are necessary.

91. Educational opportunities for nomadic children differentiate between the two sexes and girls have low enrolment ratios and high rates of repetition and drop-out.

92. Schooling provided for nomadic children is inefficient, 'structured' to fail them rather than to help them to improve their situation. Special kinds of boarding schools could encourage nomadic children to acquire literacy skills and ensure that they receive a cohesive, thorough and efficient education relevant to their needs and style of life.

93. As regards teacher training, problems are the shortage of teachers in these areas, the need for special training to work with nomadic populations and for training using a curriculum designed to meet the needs of the nomadic environment.

94. The absence of schools and other educational facilities makes the problem of adult education particularly difficult. Once schools exist, they can be used for evening classes for both men and women.

95. Regional and international co-operation are needed in research, financial resources, technical assistance and support services to help solve problems related to water supply, health and education. There are no general regional and international policies for collecting data on nomads and establishing regional and international data banks on the conditions governing their education. Experience in the provision of mobile school units to nomadic populations could usefully be disseminated among researchers and planners.

Education for Palestinian children

96. Educational services for the Palestinian refugees hosted in Jordan, Lebanon, Syrian Arab Republic and the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip are largely provided by the UNRWA Department of Education. In 1987/1988 this involved 633 elementary and preparatory schools, a student enrolment of 349,321 and a teaching staff of 10,101. UNRWA provides vocational and technical education to the children of Palestinian refugees along pre-service teacher-training programmes for Palestinian teachers.

97. Drop-out rates in elementary schools in 1987 were at 3.3 per cent in all UNRWA schools in Jordan, Syrian Arab Republic, the West Bank and Gaza. Repetition rates in the elementary cycle, regardless of sex, reached 5.3 per cent. There was no significant difference between boys and girls regarding drop-out and repetition rates. Drop-out rates in the first, second and third preparatory cycles reached 7 per cent and repetition rates reached 8.9 per cent. Again there was no significant difference between boys' and girls' drop-out rates; repetition rates were higher for boys than for girls (9.7 per cent and 8 per cent respectively). Drop-out and repetition rates seem to be relatively high.

98. Students who successfully complete the preparatory cycle are, therefore, usually transferred to either public or private schools in the host country. Crucial questions, for which insufficient data are available, are whether the quality of education provided is adequate and good enough to help them compete with the non-refugee children when applying for admission to the higher levels of education, whether there are obstacles which could hinder their transfer to and acceptance by public or private schools, resulting from difficult and rigid formal procedures, to what extent refugee children succeed in the more advanced levels of education without any hardships or maladjustment and, finally, whether there are any host country provisions giving them equitable right and access to higher and university education.

Education for migrants' dependants

99. Provision of education to migrants' children by host countries has been a growing trend in those countries which depend on migrant labour. Western European countries, which host a considerable number of Arab migrant workers, pay considerable attention to such provision. Arab workers who migrate within the region become subject to the prevailing legal system of the host countries. It should be noted that the Arab States, particularly those in the Gulf, play host to migrant workers who are not Arabs.

100. In some host countries, legal restrictions on access to schooling exist at various levels, from State-run kindergarten through to higher education institutions. As regards elementary school, they are based on the length of stay of the parents in the host country, the place of employment and the age of the child. Denied access to State schools, migrant children attend private, fee-paying schools. Furthermore, the teaching content (particularly in the credit-hour system) applied in schools where migrants' children form the majority is different from that of those where nationals are schooled and access to higher education is more or less restricted to nationals, especially in medical and engineering faculties.

101. In some host countries, dependants lose their legal right of residency once they finish secondary school or reach the age of 18 unless they become employed or are granted admission into a local higher education institution, which is normally difficult. Moreover, some sending countries discriminate against emigrants' dependants who receive host country high school diplomas as regards university admission. Quotas, grade point averages and tuition differentials are all applied.

Education for the disabled

102. Considering their number, disabled persons constitute, after women, the second most important group among the disadvantaged population: at least one child in ten is born with or acquires a serious physical or mental impairment and 80 per cent of the 200 million children with disabilities in the world live in developing countries. The little provision that exists for disabled persons in developing countries is located in a few large cities, and is accessible to the very few.

103. Within the region, although the general climate has changed considerably during the past few years and education of such children is considered a human right, the picture is not much brighter: out of an estimated 7.5 million disabled children under 15 in 1980, only 1 to 3 per cent received any training or education.

104. Over the years, some Arab States have included disability statistics in their population census (Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic); others have resorted to registration, sometimes voluntary, sometimes linked to service provision. Availability of precise figures is incomplete and suffers from difficulties related to definition and categorization of disability. However, the target group concerned here includes those who have difficulties in learning and communication and those who have behaviour difficulties.

105. Generally, pupils with mild and moderate learning difficulties are in ordinary schools; the hidden population with special needs, their needs go unidentified and unattended, and many drop out during the primary cycle. The issue that needs to be addressed today concerns the school reform, curriculum adaptation, teacher preparation and support services needed to maintain this pupil population in the ordinary school.

106. The education of disabled children is not only the concern of a few specialists and a few special schools as is largely the case in most Arab States; it is the responsibility of the education system.

107. The major obstacles to the development of educational provision for disabled children and adults in the region include the absence of clearly defined policies and of planning for special education at the national level, the perception of special education in some countries as a charitable venture, the fact that responsibility for special education in all countries is not entrusted to educational authorities and the administrative and professional dichotomy between 'regular' and 'special' education which continues to divide the educational community and to create isolated groups of disabled children.

108. If the situation is to be remedied, the following four issues need to be addressed: clearly stated policies for educational provision for disabled persons within the framework of existing educational structures and in the context of the principle of education for all; the development of national plans to work out modalities with the different partners (parents, disabled persons, specialists, etc.); the necessary school reform, based on the stated policy of the country introduced to accommodate curriculum flexibility, teacher support services and material support; and educational personnel rethought and designed to reflect new thinking and new orientations in service provision.

109. The Conference may wish to address itself the following important questions:

1. How can we best provide a mechanism to ensure the collection of needed data on the education of special and disadvantaged groups in order to properly assess the existing situation and plan for their education?

2. Since special and disadvantaged groups are continuously interacting with other groups in the society and thus cannot be treated separately or in isolation from the rest of society, what kind of policies and measures should be taken to ensure the access of such disadvantaged groups to education and their full participation in the development of their societies?

3. Do we need an innovative and renewed type of education for rural areas, which is more relevant to the needs of the rural people and can adequately prepare their youngsters for rural life and promote among them new attitudes towards modernization? If so, what kind of changes need to be introduced into the curriculum which can accomplish these objectives and can also enhance the role of the village school in the development of rural communities?

4. What type of education should be provided to the children of nomadic populations? How can we adequately provide it to them? What policies and measures should be undertaken to help achieve this objective?

5. Do we need to establish a regional centre for the disabled to help train special education personnel, particularly teachers? If so, what type of regional and international co-operation will be needed to accomplish this objective? Furthermore, how can we provide for the special educational needs of the disabled children in the regular school and what school reform, curriculum, flexibility, teacher training and support services will be needed to create a school for all children?

CHAPTER 4

The role of higher and post-secondary education in the development and renewal of basic education and literacy programmes

110. The university and literacy round table, held on 7 September 1990 as part of the 42nd session of the International Conference on Education, laid stress on the importance of mobilizing all social institutions in the quest for the eradication of illiteracy in the Arab States region. The university, with its intellectual, scientific and human resources, was placed in the forefront of these institutions, and its role in promoting literacy and post-literacy activities was described as significant and crucial.

111. Higher education, by reason of its vocation of research and reflection, its task of training education personnel, and the generally high quality and diversity of its faculty members, has a duty to help provide a better understanding of the socio-economic and cultural characteristics, needs and potential of ARABUPEAL's target populations and to formulate, test and evaluate new strategies and methods (financial, administrative and educational) for resolving those populations' problems. Within this broad area there are at least four major fields in which higher education can, through reflection and action, play an important role.

112. The first is the field of research and reflection. The university's interest in the advancement and utilization of basic knowledge about the education sciences and related disciplines enables it to seek innovative solutions to some of the specific problems being tackled by ARABUPEAL. A major emphasis should be placed on studies which provide a means to establish closer links between the various kinds and levels of education for literacy and the world of work and to turn literacy education into a better tool for solving other fundamental problems of survival which marginal groups have to grapple.

113. The transfer from the concept of an academic primary education to that of basic education and extending the basic education stage to comprise both primary and preparatory levels, necessitate major structural transformations in the education system, ranging from the period of schooling needed to learn basic skills to the adoption of new delivery systems based on self-learning techniques and methodologies. Universities and their educational research centres must study the present situation and identify the structural requirements that would ensure the implementation of basic education in order to guarantee the provision of opportunities to the age-groups concerned. They can also suggest suitable non-formal and incidental types of education and propose the measures necessary to further the links between formal and non-formal education and to provide basic education opportunities to those who have not been able to attend formal schooling.

114. The tendency in Arab States to continue to utilize traditional approaches and mechanisms in efforts to deal with issues related to basic education and literacy limits their abilities to attain stated objectives and targets; higher education's role in the renewal of teacher-training programmes and its research function are indispensable.

115. The universities' educational research capacity is needed to perform various tasks for the benefit of literacy activities: evaluation of the magnitude of the problem, suggestion of new strategies and methods to deal with it, participation in the design of relevant contents and materials, follow-up and evaluation of implemented campaigns and compilation of the feedback information needed to revise the adopted course of action, and implementation of innovations such as the utilization of mass media organs (radio/television, etc.) in accelerating literacy and post-literacy activities.

116. A field closely linked to those mentioned earlier is improvement of the quality of education through the implementation of pilot projects based on a global strategy and covering therefore a wide range of activities, from basic studies to the evaluation of results, taking in infrastructure and equipment, the development of syllabuses, and learning aids and teacher training. These projects should make it possible to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of educational methods or new and diversified approaches so that objectives and targets may be met more swiftly, more completely and inexpensively. What is needed is increased awareness of the effects of introducing, as part of global education strategies, variables that have hitherto been given insufficient consideration in the education processes: recourse to educational technology and the mass media, community participation, linking school and out-of-school education and so on.

117. The World Declaration on Education for All suggested that 'All available instruments and channels of information, communications, and social action could be used to help convey essential knowledge and inform and educate people on social issues. In addition to the traditional means, libraries, television, radio and other media can be mobilized to realize their potential towards meeting basic education needs of all'.[1]

118. Despite the importance of these tasks, participation of Arab universities' research centres is still limited and the Conference may wish to consider ways and means of promoting this involvement.

119. Another field of action is the universities' contribution to the setting up of appropriate planning, administration, management and monitoring processes. Higher education could help to make national policies appropriate to deal with specific regional and local socio-educational problems and to see that they are effectively implemented (in each university's sphere of influence). Similarly, university participation in reviewing the criteria and mechanisms that determine educational investment and expenditure, and the source and allocation of funds can be important for the preparation of financial and administrative measures to meet local and regional objectives by seeking to rationalize and reallocate resources and set up new types of facilities.

120. The third field in which higher education can contribute concerns the quality and effectiveness of teachers and other education personnel. Specifically, the broadening of the functional activities designed to meet the educational needs of the target populations calls for universities to make further efforts at quantitative and qualitative improvement of pre-service and in-service teacher training.

121. It is vital that theoretical and practical training be provided for the personnel required to expand pre-school education, especially those whose task it is to promote non-formal initial education in marginal urban and rural populations.

122. If the target populations are to be properly catered for primary education personnel - teachers, inspectors and administrators - must have acquired during their pre-service or in-service training a set of abilities, attitudes, knowledge and skills that will enable them to respond effectively to the needs and specific characteristics that flow from the socio-economic

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1. World Conference on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs, Jomtien, 1990, World Declaration on Education for All, op. cit., Article 5. Some of these are in use on a limited scale in some Arab States and extensive testing is needed prior to generalization. This is the responsibility of higher education research centres in close co-operation with ministries of education and other authorities responsible for literacy programmes.

and cultural repercussions of these populations' social exclusion. The university could resolve technical problems encountered in turning out primary-school teachers who are capable of satisfying the particular needs of the target populations.

123. As regards the training of teachers for general education and diversified secondary education (technical training), the universities' most pressing task in the training of the needed manpower is to help improve science and technology teaching.

124. The teaching function of the universities is responsible for preparing literacy personnel, promoting social awareness of the gravity of increased illiteracy and participating in implementing non-traditional approaches to combat illiteracy, in addition to the direct involvement of professors and students (under the university service scheme) in literacy and post-literacy teaching. Arab universities' role in these areas is still marginal.

125. Participants in the regional seminar on the training of basic education teachers in the Arab States region, organized by EIPDAS (Cairo, 1989), noted that in spite of the intensive efforts exorted by some Arab States to crystallize relevant objectives for basic education and to formulate them in an operational manner, it remains difficult to communicate these objectives to the teachers, on the one hand, and to train them to achieving them, on the other. Furthermore, the ability to maintain links between theory and practice, on the one hand, and education and the world of work, on the other, major features of the basic education philosophy, remains a crucial responsibility which falls beyond the traditional teacher-training programmes. The seminar stressed the importance of providing specialized training for basic education teachers, within a context of integration between this type of formal education and the programmes of literacy and adult education. It recommended that faculties of education undertake the incorporation of some courses in adult education and literacy into the training programmes designed for basic education teachers.

126. Another prerequisite if ARABUPEAL is to be successful is the staff required for planning, administration, inspection and evaluation, and for training literacy and adult education workers. It is quite possible that the problems facing the majority of the countries in the region derive mainly from the dearth of qualified staff who are systematically informed of advances already made, any experiments that may have been made generally available, existing methods and materials, and the specific characteristics of educational activities of this kind.

127. The university should be thinking seriously about the type of training it is to provide for educational planners, administrators and inspectors to enable them to adapt their work to the particular needs of the target population groups, given the paucity of financial resources available.

128. The last field in which higher education can contribute is that of ancillary university activities, those designed to make everyone at universities (students, academic staff and other categories of personnel) aware of the problems facing the society to which they belong. This field can do much for the application of intersectorality for the strategies to be applied to solve the target populations' socio-educational problems. Many are the integrated activities (education, health, nutrition, employment, housing and leisure) that a university could develop around programmes for out-of-school basic education and literacy work.

129. In this respect, non-traditional universities have an important function to perform for the benefit of societies-community services to local communities. Non-traditional universities have provided literacy and post-literacy programmes with significant contributions which have taken many

CHAPTER 5

Co-operation for the development of education

132. Certain major undertakings by UNESCO and the international community constitute frames of reference and provide policy guidelines for co-operation: the Plan of Action for the Eradication of Illiteracy by the Year 2000, the World Declaration on Education for All, the Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs endorsed by the Jomtien Conference, the Recommendation of the international congress on 'Planning and Management of Educational Development' (1990), Recommendation No. 77 of the 42nd session of the International Conference on Education, the World Decade for Cultural Development (1988-1997), the Plan for the Development of Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace, and the Plan for the Development of Human Rights Teaching.

133. More specific to the Arab States, the recommendations of the previous sessions of MINEDARAB have guided UNESCO's action in the region and were instrumental in fostering closer co-operation. The Abu Dhabi Conference emphasized the value in terms of other's experience and expertise derived by the Arab region from co-operation with other regions. Through the Declaration and recommendations of that conference, Arab States expressed their willingness to enter into a dialogue with the other regions. Significant progress has been achieved in the implementation of the recommendations. The last 13 years have seen many regional activities (meetings, studies and exchange of visits and information).

134. Any deliberations on regional co-operation in the field of education must take into account the relevant activities undertaken or planned by other intergovernmental bodies active in the Arab States, particularly ALECSO, ISESCO and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). The agreement concluded between UNESCO and ALECSO which resulted from the Abu Dhabi Conference gave new impetus to a relationship already characterized by strong co-operation. Other regional and subregional bodies playing an active role in the promotion of education in the region include the Arab Federation for Technical and Vocational Education, the Association of Arab Universities, ABEGS and its Arab Centre for Educational Research, the Arab Planning Institute and the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development.

135. The Educational Innovation Programme for Development in the Arab States (EIPDAS), established by UNESCO and the Arab Centre for Research in Higher Education, itself established with the co-operation of ALECSO, was created in conformity with Recommendation 28 of the Abu Dhabi Conference. Since 1979, over 100 institutions in 16 Arab States have been associated with the programme, and several States, particularly Kuwait, the headquarters of the network's regional co-ordinating unit, have given material and financial support.

136. Between 1977 and 1990, UNESCO carried out many educational activities of co-operation in the Arab States with extra-budgetary financing provided by UNDP, the World Bank, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNICEF, the World Food Programme (WFP) and by Arab funds such as the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND), the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD) and funds-in-trust. New and encouraging forms of co-operation, sometimes on an experimental basis, were established between UNESCO and the countries of the region, including joint schemes to enable experts to be lent for short periods to neighbouring States.

137. The Conference may wish to consider some new dimensions of co-operation with a view to increasing its efficiency and impact, to helping to bridge gaps which tend to retard the development of education systems and to strengthening

forms, such as direct involvement of professors, students and personnel in literacy teaching, promoting public awareness through lecture forums, provision of advice and consultations to literacy personnel and the use of university facilities to literacy classes. The service function in Arab universities seems to be placed at a low level of priority and its impact on literacy is therefore still below the level required.

130. The types of activities suggested above form a body of interrelated initiatives that mutually enhance one another. Although the accent has been placed on activities for local population groups, it is obvious that the effectiveness of this contribution will depend largely on suitable concerted action by the university and school authorities together.

131. The Conference may wish to discuss ways and modalities allowing a greater involvement of post-secondary and higher education in the processes of developing and renovating basic education and literacy programmes. More specifically, the Conference may wish to discuss the following questions:

1. What are the immediate priorities in terms of development and renovation of the structures, contents, methods and techniques of basic education and literacy programmes?

2. What are the priorities in the area of training of educational personnel for basic education and literacy programmes? What is the role of higher education in this?

3. What types of research are urgently needed and what specific roles should be assigned to research centres affiliated to higher education institutions?

4. What are the best forms of co-operation between higher education research centres and those connected to ministries of education? What specific roles should be assigned to each of them?

5. What type of literacy action and educational services for adults should be directly organized as a priority by the institutions of higher learning as part of their ancillary activities?

or systematizing forms of co-operation conducive to a more effective use of the region's existing and potential resources.

138. There was clear recognition at the Jomtien Conference that significant improvement in meeting basic learning needs would be the result of strengthened partnerships, partnerships at both regional and international levels. 'International co-operation should give priority to the countries currently least able to meet the basic learning needs of their populations.'[1]

139. Regional and international co-operation in educational planning, management, information systems, research and evaluation was given strong encouragement in the Mexico City Congress. One anticipated follow-up is an international network which will provide an important mechanism for co-operation.

140. Increased co-operation between Member States of the region as well as with regional and international non-governmental organizations in providing educational services for Palestinian children has been a feature of the period since Abu Dhabi.

141. While the main effort to develop endogenous science and technology education must be made by Member States themselves, there is much to be gained from a form of regional and international co-operation which leads to exchanges of ideas and comparisons of experience, encourages endogenous innovation and supports national efforts to install basic facilities and introduce formal and non-formal training and information programmes.

142. The rapid expansion of higher education in the 1970s and 1980s caused certain problems concerning maintaining the quality of education and adapting training and research in higher education establishments to meet the changing needs of society. Regional and international co-operation could help to provide solutions, for instance by encouraging exchanges of information and the sharing of experience, increasing the mobility of teaching and research personnel in the Arab States and promoting more rational use of the skills available in the region. Viewed from this angle, the International Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in the Arab and European States bordering on the Mediterranean (Nice, 1976) and the Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in the Arab States (Paris, 1978), adopted under the auspices of UNESCO, and the regional and subregional centres for research in higher education, are all instruments to be used in developing international and regional co-operation in ways and for purposes which the Conference will certainly wish to specify. The ratification[2] of the Nice and Paris Conventions by a greater number of Arab States and their implementation could be of major value in strengthening such co-operation.

143. In the last 25 years the Arab region as a whole has made considerable progress in developing educational information systems. In some countries the collection, organization and processing of data are systematically planned and managed by educational information centres whose success seems to warrant their spread to the region as a whole linking at national, subregional and regional levels educational data with the principal indicators and with

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1. World Conference on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs, Jomtien, 1990, Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs, op. cit., para. 15.
2. As at 1 November 1990, the Nice Convention had been ratified by Algeria, Egypt, Italy, Turkey, Malta, Morocco and Yugoslavia and the Paris Convention by Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

data on socio-economic development. ALECSO and UNESCO, particularly through IBE, could share their acquired experience in this field with Member States engaged in these activities.

144. Co-operative activities by UNESCO, ALECSO and ABEGS for training researchers and establishing national centres have also led to the establishment of a subregional centre for educational research for the Gulf States in Kuwait and a centre for research in higher education in the Syrian Arab Republic.

145. Regional and international co-operation could play a useful role in implementing new strategies to reduce building costs and develop endogenous educational industries. Sharing experience in using more economical forms of production, promoting national educational industries in the region and circulating the results of these activities are forms of co-operation which the Conference may wish to discuss. Interesting projects include the low-cost construction study by UNESCO and a group of Arab States, financed by the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and AFESD, and a feasibility study on the development of educational industries in Arab countries carried out jointly by ALECSO, AFESD and UNESCO.

146. In the light of the above, the Conference may wish to examine the following questions:

1. What are the priority fields and the optimal forms for regional and international co-operation?

2. How can machinery and procedures for the national planning and the co-ordination of co-operation resources be improved?

3. What national, subregional, regional and international measures would best encourage the mobilization of co-operation resources regionally and internationally?

4. What policy for regional and international co-operation would assure that the priority beneficiaries are the poorest States and what measures are deemed most appropriate for the development of the education of the children of Palestinian refugees?